Colin Heywood


_The Ottoman World, the Mediterranean and North Africa, 1660–1760_ contains fourteen articles published between 2000 and 2009. The first six are about Turkish matters in the last years of the seventeenth century—a crucial period for the Ottoman Empire in its relations with Europe. The invincibility of the Ottoman armies, which had suffered no significant defeat at western hands since the battle of Lepanto in 1571, was at last called into doubt after the Austro-Polish victory at the gates of Vienna in 1683, and, in the years that followed, the great empire started to recede as Christian armies gradually advanced east and south. The first of Heywood’s articles is on the precise dating of the Chyhryn (or Çehrin) campaign in July 1678. The event, which took place in what is now central Ukraine, marked a triumph for the Ottomans but it also, in Heywood’s words, “occasioned the first direct hostilities between Russian and Ottoman armies which, with hindsight, can be seen to have opened the way to two centuries of Russian advance and Ottoman withdrawal in the northern Black Sea region.” Heywood’s study brings out the problems of establishing the Gregorian equivalents of Ottoman dates partly due to the inconsistencies in the Ottoman usage of the Muslim calendar.

Heywood moves with enviable assurance among Ottoman documents and European ones. In his piece on two firmans of Mustafa II on the reorganization of the Ottoman courier system in 1696 he studies documents in the Provincial Archives of Macedonia in Thessalonica. His article on Luca della Rocca’s betrayal of the Venetian fortress of Grabusa in Crete to the Turks in 1691 is reconstructed mainly on the basis of Turkish documents in the British Library. The study of dragomans or interpreters at the English embassy in Istanbul is based on a document in Turkish and in an Italian translation at the Public Record Office. It gives a fascinating insight into the financial circumstances and privileges of the local staff at the embassy in 1689, and attests the very considerable prosperity of the two senior dragomans, Antonio Perone and Dimetrasco Timone, and the far more modest conditions of the junior interpreters.

Two of Heywood’s articles are on the English ambassador in Istanbul from 1692 to 1699, Lord Paget. One is about his relations with the Ottoman officials and the different mindsets that emerged, while the second, and longer, piece is on Paget’s quarrel in Edirne in 1693 with the Dutch diplomatic representative.
Coenraad van Heemskerck—an incident largely due to the personal rivalries and jealousies produced by William III’s Dutch loyalties.

From the centre of the Ottoman Empire Heywood turns to North Africa which was considered a frontier area—he discusses the definition of the Ottoman frontiers in an article entitled ‘A Frontier without Archaeology?’—and above all to Algeria. Here, however, the state of the documentation is a far cry from what it is in Turkey. Not only has Algeria in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries been studied relatively little, but hardly any “indigenous archival sources” have survived. One of the few exceptions is an Arabic document from Algiers dated 1683, discovered by Heywood at the British Library and concerning the sale by two merchants from Tunis of a small armed merchant vessel to the English merchant Lionel Croft. Historians are consequently reliant on consular reports (which survive in abundance) and the impressions of western travellers. It is largely on the consular reports that Heywood bases his article on Robert Cole, ‘An English Merchant and Consul-General in Algiers circa 1676–1712,’ his study of the lists of Algerine fleets compiled between 1686 and 1713 by the consul Samuel Martin and various travellers, and ‘Ideology and the Profit Motive in the Algerine Corso: the Strange Case of the Isabella of Kirkcaldy, 1709–1714,’ an interesting case study of a Scottish vessel captured by Algerine ‘corsairs.’

Piracy, or, more correctly, privateering, was hardly a monopoly of the Algerines, and Heywood discusses its practice by the English in the Aegean at the time of the wars with France between 1689 and 1714. Privateering, by the English even more than the Algerines, remained one of the banes of the French merchant community in Cyprus at the turn of the eighteenth century, the subject of Heywood’s “The Economics of Uncertainty?”

Heywood’s last article is on Fernand Braudel and his treatment of the Ottomans. Braudel’s influence has been all pervasive among scholars dealing with the Mediterranean over the last 65 years, and one of his great merits was to introduce the Turks into Mediterranean history, “to bring,” as Heywood puts it, “Ottoman history in from the cold.” But how valid, now, can his presentation of Turkish involvement be judged? He knew no Turkish and was thus unable to consult Ottoman sources directly. He was also manifestly pro-Spanish in his analysis of the sixteenth century. “Braudel,” writes Heywood, “using western sources and emphasizing the culturally nonspecific aspects of the Mediterranean world, saw two sides coming together.” In fact, as other Ottomanists have pointed out, the two sides tended to diverge and have done so ever since.

The elegance with which Heywood writes and the truly admirable quality of his research make The Ottoman World, the Mediterranean and North Africa,